

# Town of Amherst

---

## DESIGN REVIEW BOARD HANDBOOK



Planning Department  
Town Hall  
4 Boltwood Avenue  
Amherst, Massachusetts  
413.259.3040  
[planning@amherstma.gov](mailto:planning@amherstma.gov)

Adopted: October 1983  
Amended through: January 2009

# **Town of Amherst Massachusetts**



Amended through January 2009

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I.	<a href="#"><u>INTRODUCTION</u></a>	1
II.	<a href="#"><u>PURPOSE</u></a>	2
III.	<a href="#"><u>DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MEMBERS</u></a>	3
IV.	<a href="#"><u>WHO SHOULD APPLY TO THE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD</u></a>	4
V.	<a href="#"><u>MAP OF DESIGN REVIEW DISTRICTS</u></a>	5
VI.	<a href="#"><u>HOW TO APPLY—CHECKLIST</u></a>	6
VII.	<a href="#"><u>DESIGN REVIEW PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS</u></a>	12
VIII.	<a href="#"><u>DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS—ILLUSTRATIONS</u></a>	14
IX.	<a href="#"><u>DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS—DETAILS</u></a>	19
X.	<a href="#"><u>DESIGN REVIEW BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS</u></a>	21
XI.	<a href="#"><u>CONCLUSION</u></a>	22
XII.	<a href="#"><u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u></a>	23
XIII.	<a href="#"><u>APPENDIX A—AMHERST ZONING BYLAW SECTION 3.20</u></a>	24



## **INTRODUCTION**

The need to establish design guidelines for development in downtown Amherst was recognized as early as 1972. In the spring of 1983, in response to construction of a new, modern bank building in the middle of Amherst's 19<sup>th</sup> century brick commercial blocks, Town Meeting discussed the creation of a Design Review Board (DRB). The Planning Board and Historical Commission drafted zoning amendments and in October 1983 Town Meeting added Section 3.2, Design Review, to the Amherst Zoning Bylaw. This established the Design Review Board, defined a downtown Design Review area, and set the original design principles and standards used by the Design Review Board in reviewing development proposals.

Over decades of practice, through regular refinements of the design review regulations, and with the help of citizen collaboration and the guidance of Town staff, the role and jurisdiction of the Design Review Board has evolved. The DRB's geographic jurisdiction now includes: 1) all exterior changes requiring building or land use permits within the downtown business districts, and 2) any exterior change within 150 feet of the edge of the green spaces in the Town Common. These areas are established by overlay districts and are of primary importance for the preservation of historic architecture and significant site features, and for the application of sound urban design. Design review is also required for all Town projects above and beyond routine maintenance anywhere in Amherst. This includes any construction, alteration, demolition or removal of a structure or site by the Town.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Design Review Board (DRB) is to *advise* permit applicants, Town departments, and other Town boards and committees on the design (function and appearance) of projects in the Design Review (DR) District (all downtown business zoning districts) and the Town Common Design Review District (the Town Common and all areas within 150 feet of the edge of its green spaces). Design review is also required for all Town projects and actions throughout the community that go beyond routine maintenance.

A map showing the jurisdiction of the DRB can be found on Page 5. The DRB is specifically prohibited from imposing the architectural style of a particular period or inhibiting creative design; rather its review tries to ensure that changes will be compatible with the scale, character, and historical integrity of their surroundings.

The Design Review Board's charge and purpose is described under Section 3.2 of the Zoning Bylaw:

“ . . . to preserve and enhance the Town's cultural, economic and historical resources by providing for a detailed review of all changes in land use, the appearance of structures and the appearance of sites which may affect these resources. The review procedures are intended to:

1. Enhance the social and economic viability of the Town by preserving property values and promoting the attractiveness of the Town as a place to live, visit and shop;
2. Encourage the conservation of buildings and groups of buildings that have aesthetic or historic significance;
3. Prevent alterations that are incompatible with the existing environment or that are of inferior quality or appearance; and
4. Encourage flexibility and variety in future development.”

Other Amherst permitting bodies also use design review. In all districts, the Special Permit Granting Authority or Permit-Granting Board, as applicable, can choose to apply the provisions of Sections 3.2040 and 3.2041 of the Zoning Bylaw (the Design Review Principles and Standards) to an application, and must apply them to any construction, renovation, or expansion resulting in the creation of new townhouses, new apartments, and new two family detached dwellings or the addition of a single new dwelling unit to an existing single-family residence resulting in a two family detached dwelling.

By working together cooperatively, applicants, the Design Review Board, and other permitting-bodies can protect Amherst's environmental and architectural heritage, increase property values, stimulate economic growth and make Amherst an attractive place in which to live and shop, an exciting place to visit.

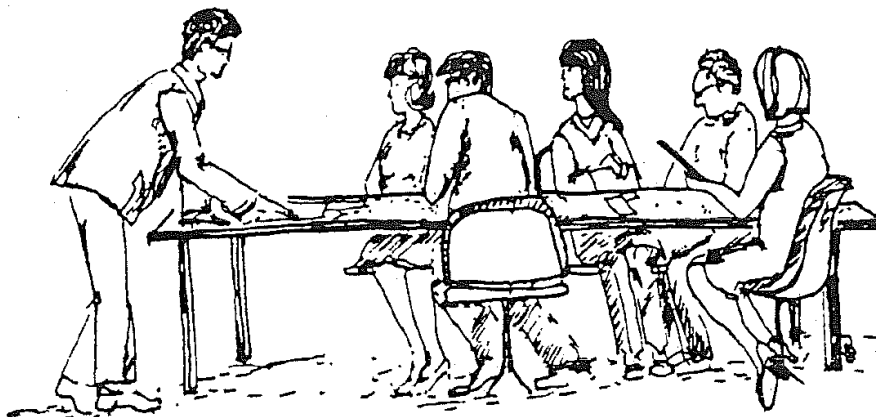
## **DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MEMBERS**

The DRB consists of five members appointed by the Select Board for three-year terms:

- Two members must be design professionals such as architects, landscape architects, and interior designers;
- One member must be a business proprietor or owner in the downtown area; and
- Two of the five members are nominated by and represent the Planning Board and Historical Commission, respectively.

The DRB reviews applications for:

- Building renovations or additions
- Façade alterations
- Landscape, site and streetscape improvements
- New construction
- New sites
- Accessory structures such as signs



## **WHO SHOULD APPLY TO THE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

The DRB gives “mandatory advice”. For applicants proposing a change within the DRB’s jurisdiction, design review is a ***mandatory*** step in the permit process, but the DRB only offers design advice and recommendations. It cannot impose permitting requirements. In those geographic areas where DRB jurisdiction does not extend, other permitting boards are authorized to apply the design review principles and standards set out in Section 3.204 of the Amherst Zoning Bylaw.

You should apply to the Design Review Board if your place of business or building is located within the DRB’s jurisdiction, which includes the Design Review District and the Town Common Design Review District (see map on Page 5), and you plan any ***construction, alteration, demolition or removal*** that affects, in any way, the exterior appearance of the building or site, including but not limited to:

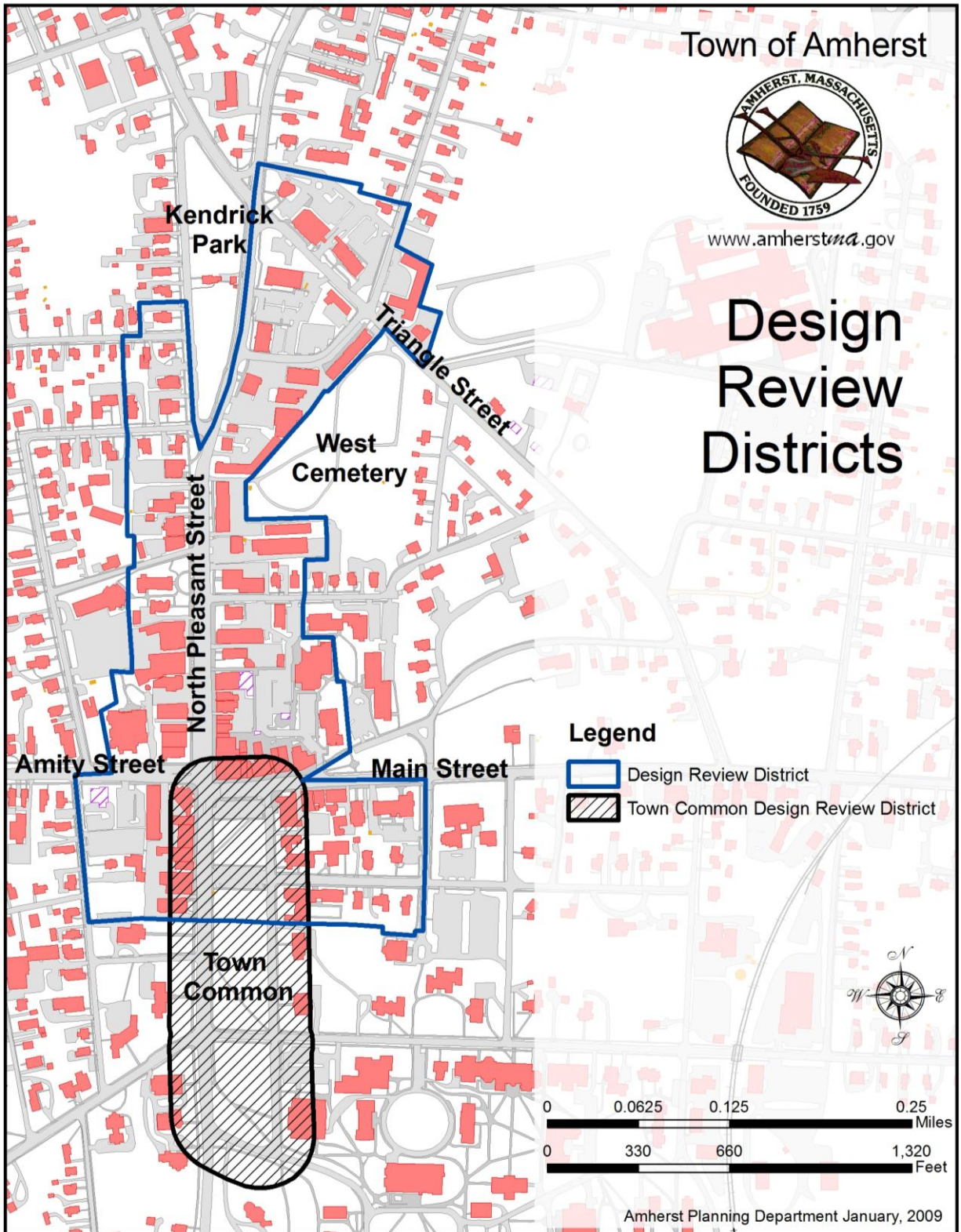
- A. **New construction** including new structures, changes in outdoor land use, or changes in site design whenever a building permit is required.
- B. **Expansion or alteration** of an existing building, site or landscape that affects the exterior appearance of a building or site.
- C. **New signs or changes to existing signs** located on the building or property.
- D. **Any exterior changes to buildings or sites within 150 feet of the Town Common.**

You should also apply to the Design Review Board if a project affects, in any way,

- 1. The color and the texture of building materials.
- 2. The type, design, and character of all:
  - a. Doors
  - b. Exterior HVAC
  - c. Fencing
  - d. Landscape and appurtenant elements
  - e. Light fixtures
  - f. Signs
  - g. Windows



## MAP OF DESIGN REVIEW DISTRICTS





## **HOW TO APPLY—CHECKLIST**

The following pages will describe in detail the three major steps of a Design Review Board application:

1. Obtain an *Application for Design Review* and consult with Town staff.
2. Generate supporting information such as plans and photographs.
3. Submit your application to begin the Design Review Board recommendation process.

☒ **STEP ONE:** Obtain an *Application for Design Review* and consult with Town staff.

All applications to the DRB shall be made on the *Application for Design Review* form available on the Town's website (<http://www.amherstma.gov/index.asp?nid=491>) or from the Planning Department on the second floor of Town Hall. Copies of design review regulations are also available online:

- Section 3.2, Design Review (Zoning) (<http://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentView.asp?DID=1173>)
- DRB Rules and Regulations (<http://www.amherstma.gov/index.asp?nid=702>)

or in the Planning Department. Planning Department staff can provide information and assistance.

The Design Review process begins when a complete application, application fee and supporting information has been submitted to the Planning Department. The Design Review Board may require additional information in order to complete an application, such as other site plans or building information are required as part of an application for a Site Plan Review, Special Permit, Variance or Building Permit. In response to a request, the DRB may waive the requirements for design review submittal and approval. Once an application has been filed, the DRB has thirty-five (35) days to respond in writing. Failure by the Design Review Board to transmit its recommendation within the thirty-five (35) day period shall be considered a recommendation for approval of the application submitted, unless the applicant has granted an extension in public meeting or in writing.

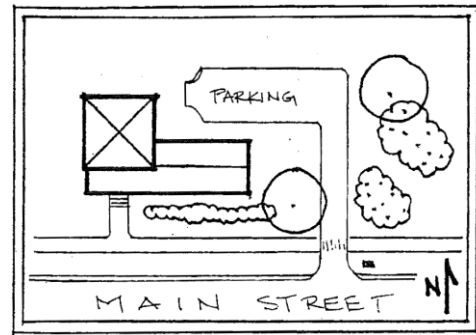
No design review shall be required in those instances where the Design Review Board determines that specific actions subject to Section 3.202 of the Zoning Bylaw do not constitute substantial alterations to the form or appearance of a building or site, and where no new or additional requirements of the Zoning Bylaw must be met for the proposed action.

☒ **STEP TWO:** Generate supporting information such as plans and photographs.

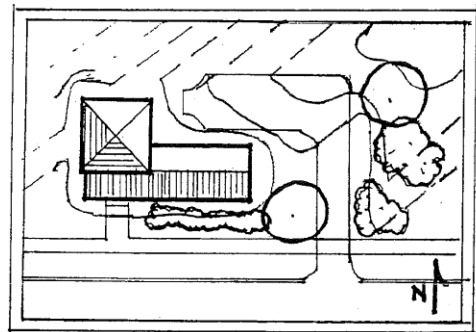
A. **New Construction:** For new construction within the Design Review Districts in Amherst Town Center (see map on Page 5) you will need to submit each of the following along with your application:

1. An accurate, scaled site plan
2. An accurate, scaled landscape plan  
\* (Items 1 and 2 can be combined on a single site plan.)
3. A building plan
4. Building elevations and architectural drawings

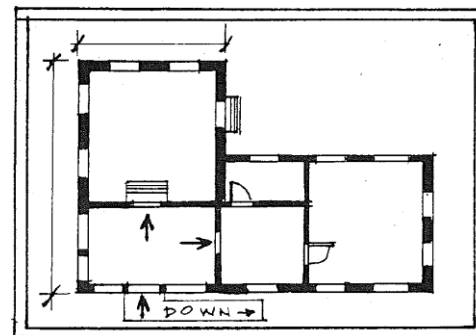
1. A scaled Site Plan should include:
  - a. Existing buildings
  - b. Existing plantings
  - c. Proposed new structures
  - d. Handicapped access features
  - e. Sidewalks, drives and lots
  - f. All site objects and fixtures



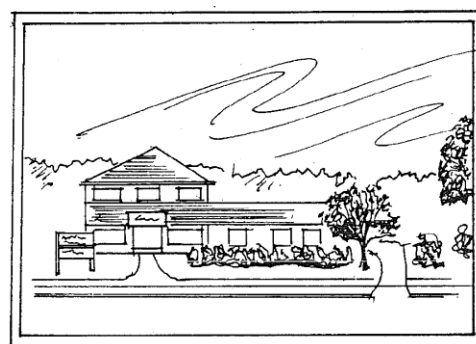
2. A scaled Landscape Plan should include:
  - a. Existing and proposed grading
  - b. Planting plan
  - c. Paving materials
  - d. All site objects and fixtures



3. A Building Plan should include:
  - a. Entrances
  - b. Stairways
  - c. Ramps
  - d. Windows and vents
  - e. External HVAC size and locations



4. Building elevations and drawings should include:
  - a. Façade treatment and materials
  - b. Existing and proposed plantings
  - c. All site objects and fixtures



- B. **Expansion or alteration**: For expansions or alterations of existing buildings, site, or landscape that affect the exterior appearance of the building or site, you will need to submit along with your application color photographs and scaled elevation drawings.

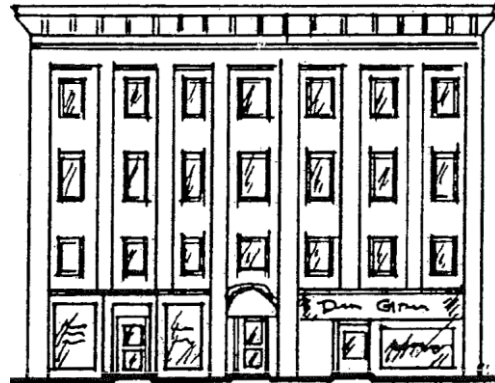
The Design Review Board or the Permit Granting Authority may also ask for the submission of a site plan with the application, in addition to the following requirements:

1. Color photographs of the existing building(s), showing all the areas to be modified.



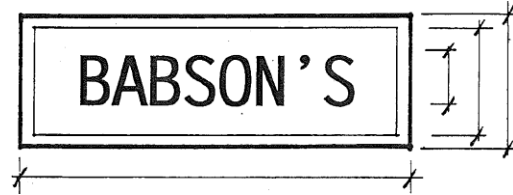
**AND / OR**

2. A scaled elevation drawing of the existing structure and proposed changes, including details of surface materials, color, windows and landscape treatment.



C. **New signs or changes to existing signs:** For new signs or changes to existing signs on the building or property, you will need to submit along with your application:

1. A scaled drawing of the sign design including materials, dimensions, color, lighting, and lettering style.

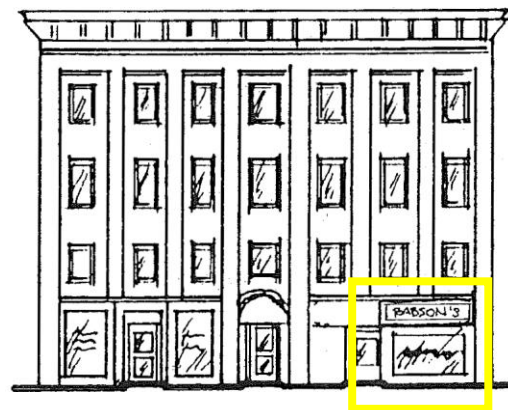


2. Color photographs of the existing sign(s) or proposed sign location(s), showing all the proposed modifications.



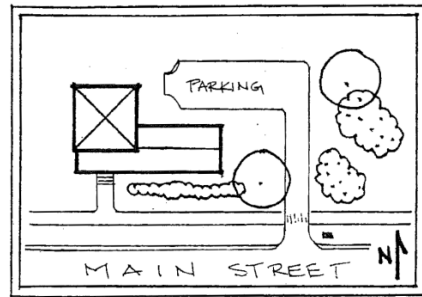
**AND / OR**

3. A scaled elevation drawing of the existing structure and proposed sign, altered to show the proper size and position of the sign(s), including details of surface materials, color, windows and landscape treatment.



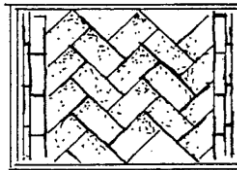
- D. **For any exterior changes to buildings or sites located within one hundred fifty feet (150 ft.) of the Town Common**, including construction, alteration, demolition, or removal that affects, in any way, the exterior of the building or site, including, but not limited to, the kind, color and texture of building materials, the type, design and character of all windows, doors, light fixtures, signs, landscape and appurtenant elements, you will need to submit along with your application:

1. The Design Review Board or the Permit Granting Authority or Board may ask for the submission of a site plan with the application.

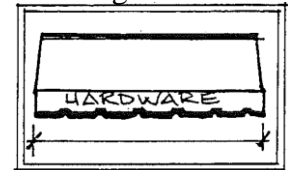


2. Detailed drawings and samples showing surface materials, color, windows, doors, signs, light fixtures, landscape and other appurtenant elements.

Brick Pattern



Awning Construction

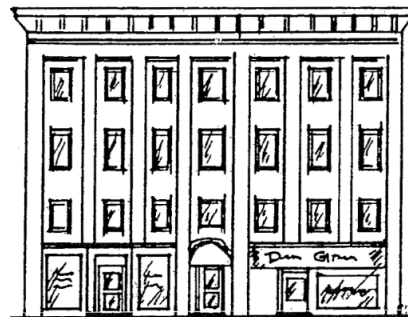


3. Color photographs of the existing building(s), showing all the areas to be modified.



**AND / OR**

4. A scaled elevation of the existing structure and proposed changes.



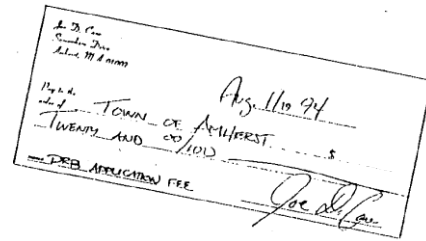
- ☑ **STEP THREE:** Submit your application to begin the Design Review Board recommendation process.

A. Submitting your application

Submit the completed Application for Design Review and all supporting documentation to the Planning Department on the second floor of Town Hall.

B. Fee

All applications shall be accompanied by the appropriate application fee, made payable to the Town of Amherst.



C. Application Review

The Board shall act upon all applications within 35 days of their receipt by the Planning Department and shall schedule a review of all applications at its next available regular meeting, provided that the application is received **at least 4 working days before the next scheduled DRB meeting**. DRB meetings usually occur twice a month. The applicant or their representative should attend the meeting to present the proposal.

D. DRB recommendations

The Board's recommendations may be final, including specifications and conditions, or it may ask that the applicant resubmit to the Board new designs or plans.

Once the DRB has made its decision, all recommendations shall be transmitted to the Building Commissioner, the Planning Board and/or the Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Applicant. Those permitting bodies may incorporate the DRB's recommendations into their conditions of approval.

\*\* Please refer to Page 21 for a more information on DRB recommendations. \*\*

## **DESIGN REVIEW PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS**

The *Design Review Principles and Standards* set forth in Sections 3.204, 3.2040 and 3.2401 of the Amherst Zoning Bylaw are the principle design guidelines used by the Design Review Board during review of all applications, including changes in signs, site layout, and building renovations or façade improvements. The guidelines help individual development proposals for buildings, facades and landscapes become part of a well-designed, aesthetically pleasing urban fabric for downtown Amherst.

### **DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS**

Section 3.2401 of the Amherst Zoning Bylaw, Design Review Standards, sets forth nine specific design elements, listed below, that the Design Review Board refers to when reviewing new applications. The Board determines whether or not these nine elements in the proposed design meet the standard of being compatible with the same elements in the surrounding buildings and landscapes.

The Design Review Board shall consider, at a minimum, the following standards in the course of the design review:

1. Height - The height of any proposed alteration should be compatible with the style and character of the building, structure or site being altered and that of the surroundings.
2. Proportions - The proportions and relationships of height to width between windows, doors, signs and other architectural elements should be compatible with the architectural style and character of the building or structure and that of the surroundings.
3. Relation of structures and spaces - The relation of a structure to the open space between it and adjoining structures should be compatible with such relations in the surroundings.
4. Shape - The shape of roofs, windows, doors and other design elements should be compatible with the architectural style and character of the building or site, and that of its surroundings.
5. Landscape - Any proposed landscape development or alteration should be compatible with the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Landscape and streetscape elements, including topography, plantings and paving patterns, should provide continuity and definition to the street, pedestrian areas and surrounding landscape.
6. Scale - The scale of a structure or landscape alteration should be compatible with its architectural or landscape design style and character and that of the surroundings. The scale of ground-level design elements such as building entryways, windows, porches, plazas, parks, pedestrian furniture, plantings and other street and site elements should



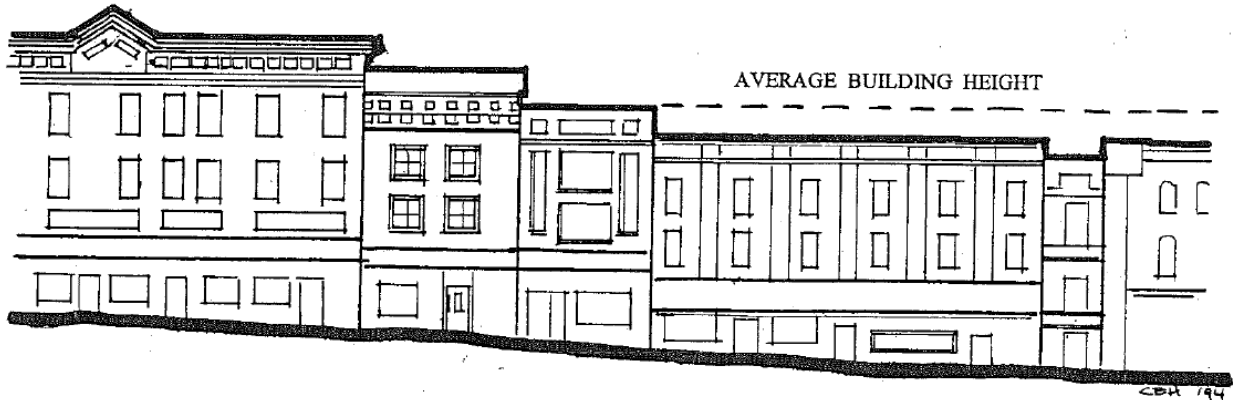
be determined by and directed toward the use, comprehension and enjoyment of pedestrians.

7. Directional expression - Building facades and other architectural and landscape design elements shall be compatible with those of others in the surrounding area with regard to the dominant vertical or horizontal expression or direction related to use and historical or cultural character, as appropriate.
8. Architectural and site details - Architectural and site details including signs, lighting, pedestrian furniture, planting and paving, along with materials, colors, textures and grade shall be treated so as to be compatible with the original architectural and landscape design style of the structure or site and to preserve and enhance the character of the surrounding area. In the downtown business districts, these details should blend with their surroundings to create a diverse, functional and unified streetscape.
9. Signs - The design of signs should reflect the scale and character of the structure or site and its surroundings. Signs should simply and clearly identify individual establishments, buildings, locations and uses, while remaining subordinate to the architecture and larger streetscape. The choice of materials, color, size, method of illumination and character of symbolic representation on signs should be compatible with the architectural or landscape design style of the structure or site, and those of other signs in the surroundings.

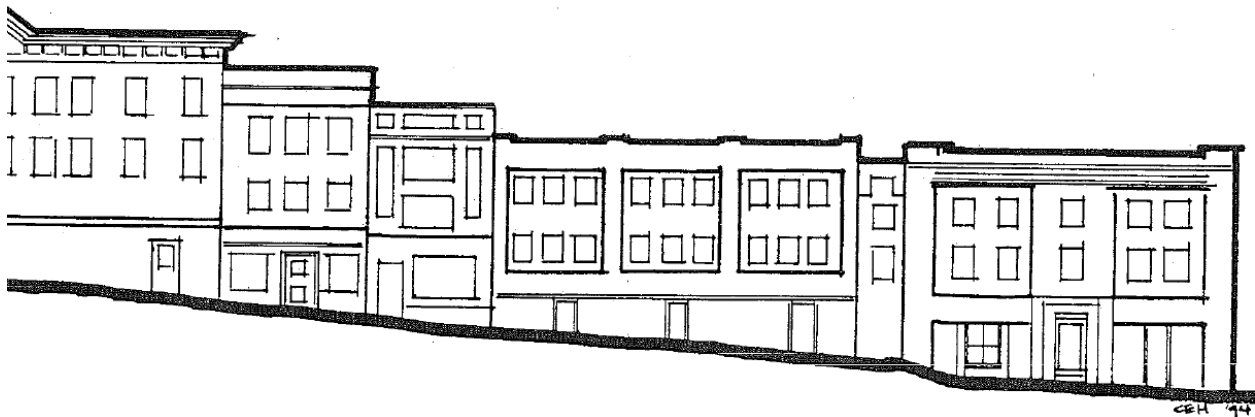
The following pages illustrate these design standards and how they can be applied to your building.

## **DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS—ILLUSTRATIONS**

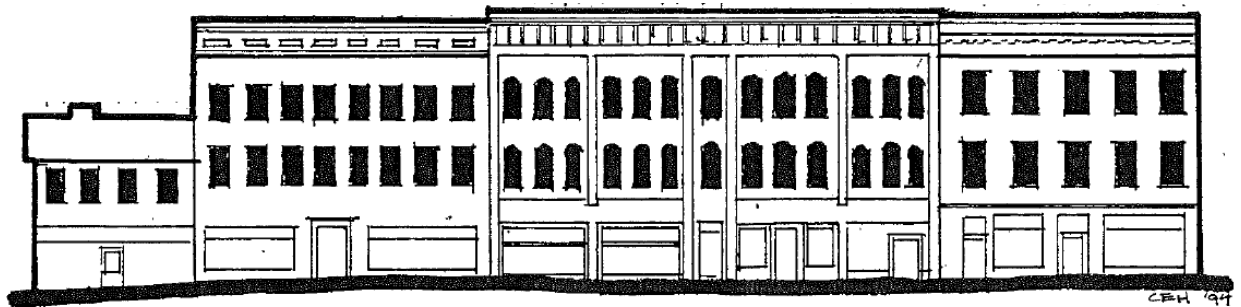
1. **Heights**—Compatible building heights give the street a unified roofline (skyline). The average height of adjacent buildings should therefore be considered during new construction or renovations.



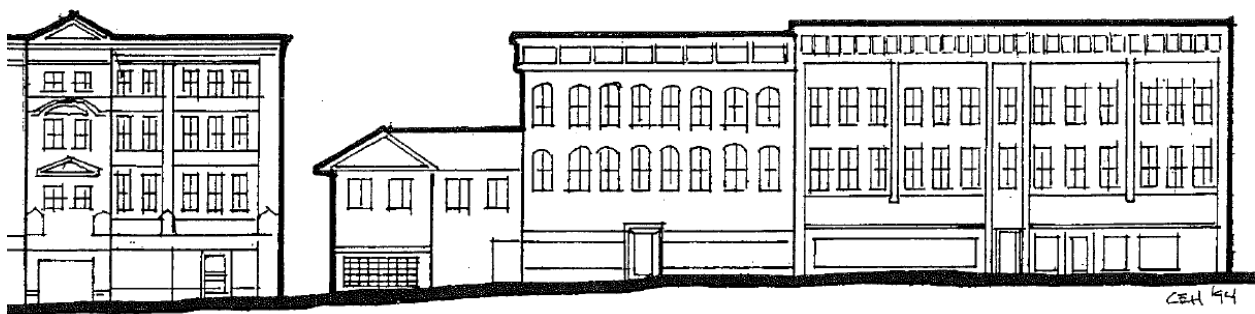
2. **Proportions**—The proportion of architectural elements, such as the height-to-width relationship of windows and awnings, and even the overall relationship of building height to its width, should relate to adjacent structures.



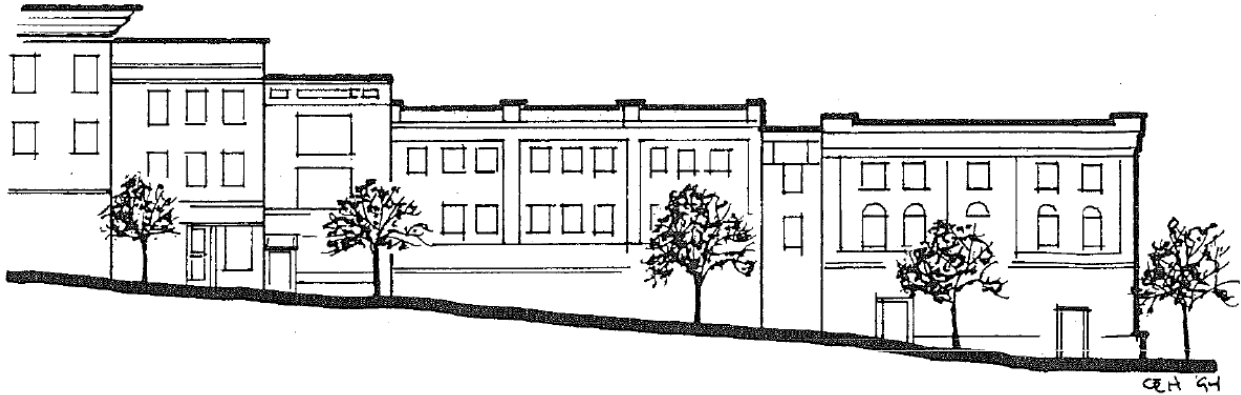
3. **Relation of structures and spaces**—The rhythm of masses and voids, as expressed in facades, windows and doors gives the street a dynamic pattern of movement. This rhythm should not be interrupted by the use of incompatible forms, size, or spacing of windows or entries.



4. **Shape**: The shapes of roofs and windows should be consistent on each façade and relate to adjacent buildings.



5. **Landscape**: The landscape and streetscape, including topography, planting and paving patterns, give continuity and definition to the street and pedestrian areas.

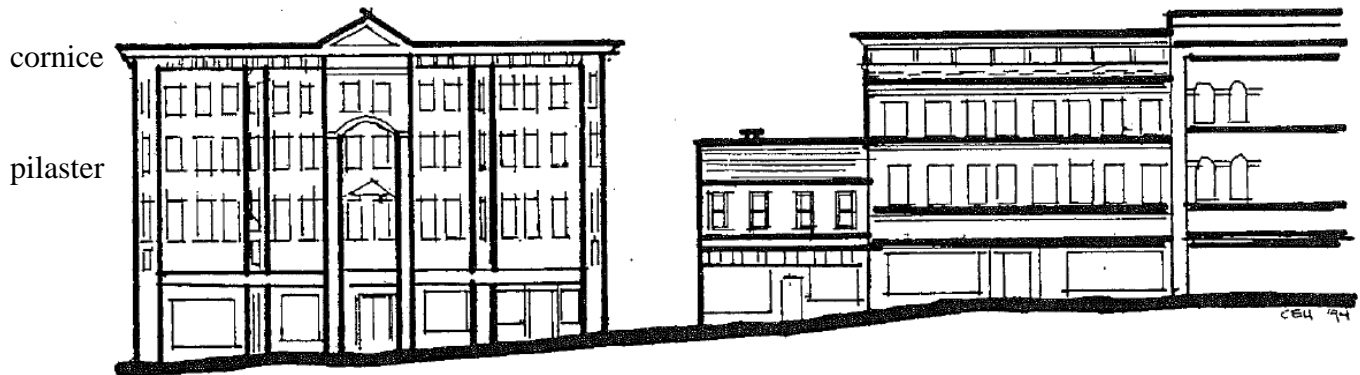


6. **Scale**: The human scale of buildings and street elements make the street scene a pleasant and exciting place for the pedestrian. Open spaces, entryways, windows, porches, sculpture and benches should be intimate and human scale, not monumental.



7. **Directional expression:** The directional dominance of horizontal and/or vertical design features like cornice lines, pilasters, and window arrangement organizes individual elements within the street block. New construction or alterations should consider the existing direction of design features on adjacent buildings.

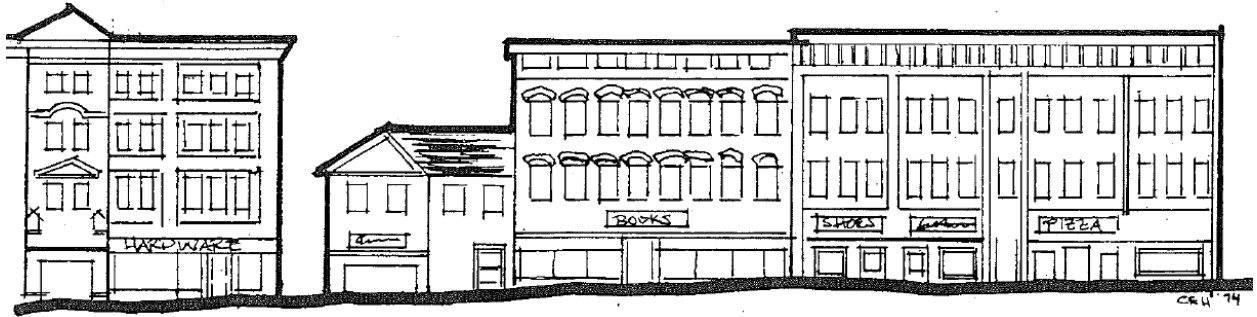
Notice the visual dominance of vertical and horizontal features.



8. **Architectural and site details:** Details, color texture, materials, light fixtures, signs and all exterior features should be visually compatible, blending to create a diverse yet unified street composition.

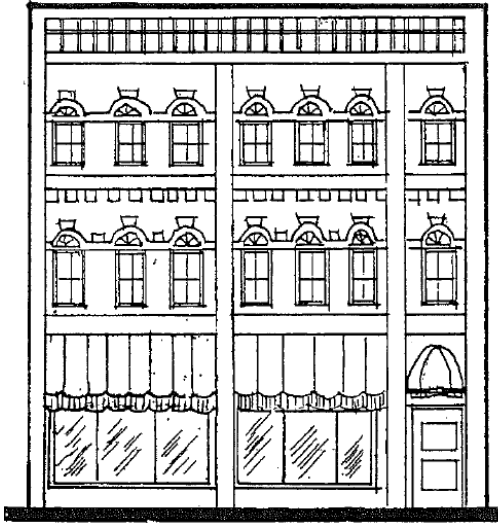


9. **Signs:** Compatible signs that reflect the scale and character of the building and surrounding landscape should identify individual stores while remaining subordinate to the larger streetscape. The choice of color, size, method of illumination, and design of signs should relate to the building's architectural style and the style of other signs on the street.

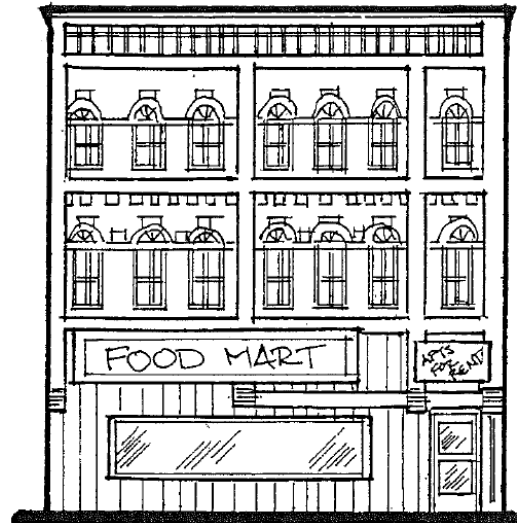


## DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS—DETAILS

1. Reflect or enhance the original qualities of a historic building by not imposing other architectural periods or styles on the facade.



THIS



NOT THIS

2. Treat the craftsmanship of a building with respect. Avoid adding too many different kinds of details and materials.



THIS



NOT THIS



3. Create architecture that is compatible with surrounding buildings.



THIS



NOT THIS

4. Treat the urban pattern as a continuous unit, so that there is continuity in its scale and overall proportions.



THIS



NOT THIS

## **DESIGN REVIEW BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ☒ DRB Recommends Approval of Application

If the Design Review Board finds that the application meets the *Design Review Standards* (see Page 12), it will vote to recommend the design for approval by other Town boards or officials, such as the Building Commissioner, Planning Board, or Zoning Board of Appeals. Once the DRB has made its decision, all recommendations shall be transmitted to the Building Commissioner, the Planning Board and/or the Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Applicant. Those permitting authorities may incorporate the DRB's recommendations into the conditions of approval.

There are a few DRB applications that do not need action and approval by other Town staff or boards because no permit step beyond design review is required. In this instance, the DRB would offer its design recommendations to the applicant. For instance, a business within 150 feet of the Town Common that wanted to change the paint color of its façade would not need a building permit. Only design review would be required.

**- OR -**

### ☒ DRB Recommends Not to Approve Application

If the application does not meet the *Design Review Standards*, the DRB may suggest design alterations and ask the applicant to resubmit new designs or plans; the DRB may recommend that other Town boards or staff not approve the application unless design issues are adequately addressed. The DRB will notify the Building Commissioner, the Planning Board and/or the Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Applicant of its decision. The DRB may postpone any final decision pending a site visit.

## CONCLUSION

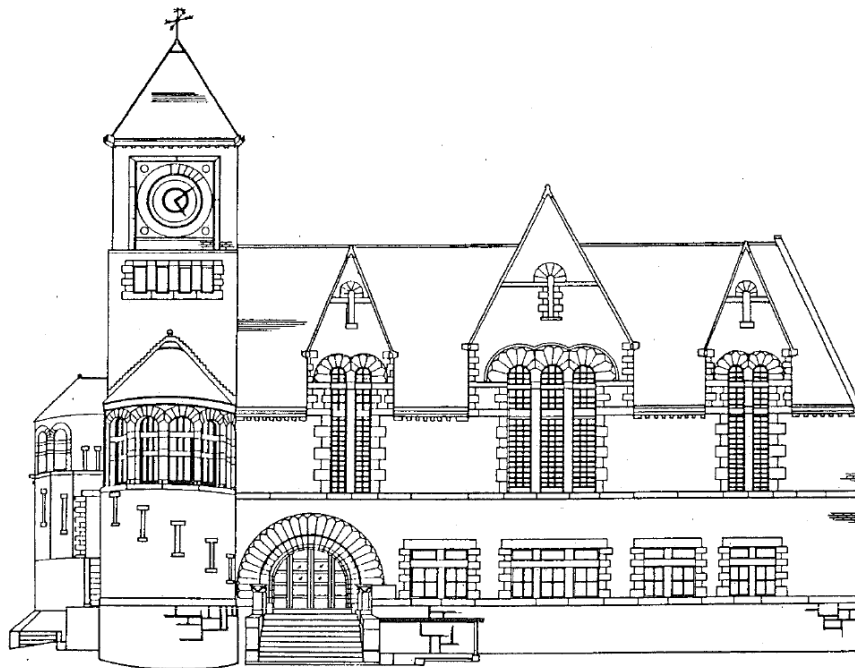
Good design is an effective way to advertise one's business and to improve the visual environment. By following the *Design Review Principles and Standards* contained in this booklet, you can help protect and enhance one of Amherst's most treasured assets—the historical character, human function, beauty and diversity of its downtown.

The staff of the Amherst Planning Department is ready to assist you by providing more information and answering your questions.

Amherst Town Hall  
4 Boltwood Avenue  
Amherst, MA 01002  
<http://www.amherstma.gov>

Planning Department  
Phone: (413) 259 – 3040  
Fax: (413) 259 – 2410

Inspection Services Department  
Phone: (413) 259 – 3030  
Fax: (413) 256 – 4076



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Design Review Board wishes express its sincere thanks for the hard work and creative contributions of Susan Ballard, who was responsible for the creation of the first Handbook in 1983, Carlton Hart, who was responsible for the 1994 Handbook, and Nathaniel Malloy for creating an electronic version of this Handbook in 2008. The Design Review Standards and the basis of the illustrations are the work of James Lee Fisk, whose 1983 Amherst Downtown Design Guide has been of great assistance to the Planning Department.

**APPENDIX A—AMHERST ZONING BYLAWS**  
**SECTION 3.20: DESIGN REVIEW DISTRICTS**

## SECTION 3.2 SPECIAL DISTRICTS

### 3.20 Design Review Districts

#### 3.200 General

The Design Review District (DR) and Town Common Design Review District (TCDR) are overlay districts and shall be superimposed on other districts established by this Bylaw. Restrictions and prohibitions of land use in the underlying district shall remain in full force, and shall not be modified by the conditions of the DR or TCDR Districts unless superseded by the restrictions and prohibitions of said districts.

##### 3.2000 Establishment of Districts

The Design Review District (DR) and Town Common Design Review District (TCDR) shall consist of the geographic areas shown for these districts on the Official Zoning Map.

##### 3.2001 Purpose

The purpose of this section and these districts is to preserve and enhance the Town's cultural, economic and historical resources by providing for a detailed review of all changes in land use, the appearance of structures and the appearance of sites which may affect these resources. The review procedures are intended to:

- 1) Enhance the social and economic viability of the Town by preserving property values and promoting the attractiveness of the Town as a place to live, visit and shop;
- 2) Encourage the conservation of buildings and groups of buildings that have aesthetic or historic significance;
- 3) Prevent alterations that are incompatible with the existing environment or that are of inferior quality or appearance; and
- 4) Encourage flexibility and variety in future development.

##### 3.201 Design Review Board

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 40A of the Massachusetts General Laws, a Design Review Board is hereby established. The Design Review Board shall review applications for all actions that are subject to the provisions of this section and shall make recommendations to the appropriate permit-granting authority concerning the conformance of the proposed action to the design review standards contained herein.

The Design Review Board shall consist of five members, two of whom are registered architects, landscape architects or persons with equivalent professional training, and one of whom operates a business or owns commercial property in the affected area. Appointments to the Design Review Board shall be made by the Select Board. Of the five Design Review Board members, one member shall represent the Planning Board and one member shall represent the Historical Commission. The Planning Board and Historical Commission shall vote to recommend their representatives and forward those recommendations to the Select Board prior to appointment. These two representative members need not be members of the Planning Board or Historical Commission.

The terms of all members of the Design Review Board shall be three years, except that when the Board is originally established, the Select Board shall make two of their appointments for a two year term and the remaining appointment shall be for a one year term.

### 3.202 Reviewable Actions

The following types of actions shall be subject to review by the Design Review Board and shall be subject to the design standards herein.

#### 3.2020 Actions in the DR Districts

All new structures, alterations or additions to existing structures, changes in outdoor land use or changes in site design which require a building permit, Site Plan Review, Special Permit or Variance and which affect the exterior architectural appearance of a building or site shall be subject to review by the Design Review Board, provided that the action occurs within the General Business (B-G) District or abutting Limited Business (B-L) zoning districts.

#### 3.2021 Actions in the TCDR District

Any construction, alteration, demolition or removal that affects the exterior architectural appearance of a building or site shall be subject to review by the Design Review Board provided that the site is on or within 150 feet of the Amherst Town Common, as measured from the outside edges of the curbs bordering the three sections of the Common's greenspace, parking lots and interior road ways inclusive.

Exterior architectural appearance shall be defined as the architectural character and general composition of the exterior of a building, including but not limited to the kind, color and texture of building materials, including paint color, and the type, design and character of all windows, doors, light fixtures, signs, awnings, utility and ventilation structures and all other appurtenant elements.

The appearance of a site shall be defined as the character, layout and general composition of the site, including but not limited to the kind, color and texture of such materials as plantings, paving, benches, site lighting, free-standing signs, utility structures and all other appurtenant elements.

#### 3.2022 Actions by Town Government

Any construction, alteration, demolition or removal of a structure or site by the Town of Amherst shall be subject to review by the Design Review Board. This includes all actions throughout the Town of Amherst, except for routine maintenance of existing structures or sites. Any repair, renovation or rehabilitation which will result in substantial alteration to the form or appearance of a structure or site shall not be considered routine maintenance. Where the status of such an action by the Town is in doubt, the department or agency responsible shall request a determination from the Zoning Enforcement Officer prior to beginning work.

### 3.203 Procedures for Review of Actions Subject to Design Review



3.2030 Applications for all actions subject to review by the Design Review Board shall be made by submitting a complete application form along with the required application materials and fee to the Planning Department where application forms may be obtained.

3.2031 All applications to the Design Review Board shall include all information required by the Rules and Regulations of the Design Review Board, as applicable, in addition to any other information that the Board may require, and any information that is required under this Bylaw as part of an application for a building permit, Site Plan Review, Special Permit or Variance. The Design Review Board may waive any and all of the requirements for design review submittal and approval.

3.2032 Upon receipt of an application for design review, the Planning Department shall immediately transmit a copy of the application to the Building Commissioner or the appropriate Town staff for the applicable permitting authorities. The Design Review Board shall review the application and transmit its recommendations in writing to the applicant and Building Commissioner or other appropriate Town staff within thirty-five (35) days of the receipt of the application. If the application for design review is associated with an application for a Variance or a Special Permit, the Building Commissioner shall immediately transmit the Design Review Board's recommendations to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Failure by the Design Review Board to make and transmit its recommendation within the thirty-five (35) day period allocated shall be considered a recommendation for approval of the application submitted, unless the applicant has granted an extension in public meeting or in writing.

3.2033 No design review shall be required in those instances where the Design Review Board determines that specific actions subject to Section 3.202 do not constitute substantial alterations to the form or appearance of a building or site, and where no new or additional requirements of the Zoning Bylaw must be met for the proposed action.

### 3.204 Design Review Principles and Standards

The design review principles and standards described in this section are intended to guide the applicant in the development of site and building design and the Design Review Board in its review of proposed actions. These principles and standards shall not be regarded as inflexible requirements and they are not intended to discourage creativity, invention or innovation. The Design Review Board is specifically precluded from mandating any official aesthetic style for Amherst or for imposing the style of any particular historical period. The design review principles and standards shall apply to all actions reviewable under Section 3.202.

#### 3.2040 General Principles

- 1) Every reasonable effort shall be made to preserve the distinguishing original qualities of a building, structure or site and its environment. The removal or alteration of any historic material or architectural features should be avoided when possible.

- 2) All buildings, structures and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and that seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.
- 3) Stylistic features distinctive to the architecture of a specific building, structure or landscape, or examples of skilled craft which characterize a building, structure or site shall be conserved or preserved where feasible and appropriate, and may be considered for use as the basis for design of additions. Their removal or alteration should be avoided whenever possible.
- 4) Contemporary design for new structures or sites, alterations or additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such new development, alterations or additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material, and when such design is compatible with the design character of the surrounding environment.
- 5) The design of alterations and additions shall, where reasonable and appropriate, strive to improve the quality, appearance and usability of existing buildings, structure and sites.

#### 3.2041 Design Review Standards

The Design Review Board shall consider, at a minimum, the following standards in the course of the design review of a proposed action.

- 1) Height - The height of any proposed alteration should be compatible with the style and character of the building, structure or site being altered and that of the surroundings.
- 2) Proportions - The proportions and relationships of height to width between windows, doors, signs and other architectural elements should be compatible with the architectural style and character of the building or structure and that of the surroundings.
- 3) Relation of Structures and Spaces - The relation of a structure to the open space between it and adjoining structures should be compatible with such relations in the surroundings.
- 4) Shape - The shape of roofs, windows, doors and other design elements should be compatible with the architectural style and character of a building or site, and that of its surroundings.
- 5) Landscape - Any proposed landscape development or alteration should be compatible with the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Landscape and streetscape elements, including topography, plantings and paving patterns, should provide continuity and definition to the street, pedestrian areas and surrounding landscape.
- 6) Scale - The scale of a structure or landscape alteration should be compatible with its architectural or landscape design style and character and that of the surroundings. The scale of ground-level

design elements such as building entryways, windows, porches, plazas, parks, pedestrian furniture, plantings and other street and site elements should be determined by and directed toward the use, comprehension and enjoyment of pedestrians.

- 7) Directional Expression - Building facades and other architectural and landscape design elements shall be compatible with those of others in the surrounding area with regard to the dominant vertical or horizontal expression or direction related to use and historical or cultural character, as appropriate.
- 8) Architectural and Site Details - Architectural and site details including signs, lighting, pedestrian furniture, planting and paving, along with materials, colors, textures and grade shall be treated so as to be compatible with the original architectural and landscape design style of the structure or site and to preserve and enhance the character of the surrounding area. In the downtown business districts, these details should blend with their surroundings to create a diverse, functional and unified streetscape.
- 9) Signs - The design of signs should reflect the scale and character of the structure or site and its surroundings. Signs should simply and clearly identify individual establishments, buildings, locations and uses, while remaining subordinate to the architecture and larger streetscape.

The choice of materials, color, size, method of illumination and character of symbolic representation on signs should be compatible with the architectural or landscape design style of the structure or site, and those of other signs in the surroundings.